

# RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

## Remodel

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### BEFORE PURSUING THE BUILDING PERMIT

*Before beginning any work, answering the questions below will help with the permitting process.*

#### Is a contractor doing the work?

There are many ways to ensure that you are working with a good contractor. The City of Houston does not license building contractors, but there are several voluntary trade organizations where you can find lists of them. You can also check the Better Business Bureau ([www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)) for business reviews, alerts and tips. Be sure to always check references and ensure that your contractor is properly insured.

#### Have you verified any deed restrictions that may be attached to your property?

Deed restrictions are written agreements that restrict or limit the use or activities that may take place on a property in a subdivision. You may purchase a copy from the County Clerk's Office, but your civic club may also have copies of your subdivision's deed restrictions. Be sure to check for any deed restrictions that exist before beginning any construction projects.

#### Are you aware of any Homeowners Association (HOA) restrictions?

HOAs sometimes place restrictions on the types of construction that can occur, so be sure to check with your HOA before beginning any construction projects.

#### Do you know where your property line begins and ends?

Prior to starting your project, make sure you know exactly where your property line begins and ends to ensure that your structure can be built in the proposed location.

#### Is your property in the 100-year floodplain, floodway or conveyance zone?

Prior to starting your project, visit [www.gims.houstontx.gov](http://www.gims.houstontx.gov) to determine if your property is located in the 100-year floodplain, floodway or conveyance zone. If you have flood insurance you can also contact your insurance provider for this information as well.



HOUSTON  
PERMITTING  
center

## HELPFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

Flood maps:

[www.gims.houstontx.gov](http://www.gims.houstontx.gov)

Deed Restrictions:

Harris County Clerk's Office  
201 Caroline 3rd Floor  
Houston, TX 77002  
713-755-6405

Montgomery County  
Clerk's Office  
210 West Davis (Hwy 105)  
Conroe, TX 77301  
936-539-7885

Fort Bend County Clerk's Office  
301 Jackson Street  
Richmond, TX 77469  
281-341-8652

COH Deed Restrictions Hotline  
(Complaints) 832-393-6333

Harris County Appraisal District:  
[www.hcad.org](http://www.hcad.org)

Montgomery Central Appraisal  
District: [www.mcad-tx.org](http://www.mcad-tx.org)

Fort Bend Central Appraisal District:  
[www.fbcad.org](http://www.fbcad.org)

Harris County Flood Control District  
(HCFCD)  
9900 Northwest Freeway  
Houston, TX 77092  
713-684-4000

Harris County Flood Control District  
Watershed Coordinator  
713-956-3074

Harris County Flood Control District  
Property Management  
713-684-4000

Center Point Energy Land & Right-of-  
Way Department (TRT-11)  
PO Box 1700  
Houston, TX 77251-1700  
Attention: Julie Bray 713-207-1557  
Linsey Williams 713-207-6211

Southwestern Bell Telephone  
Company (SBC) Right-of-Way  
7602 Spring Cypress, Room #226  
Spring, TX 77379  
Jerry Ray 281-379-7524 or Amanda  
Burus 281-379-7518

### Are there any obstacles (trees, hydrants, light poles, etc.) that must be removed or relocated?

You will be required to obtain written permission to remove any obstacles that are managed by other agencies. You must contact those agencies directly to obtain permission. Prior to removal or relocation of a hydrant, you must submit engineered drawings to the Office of City Engineer for review and approval. You are also required to obtain written permission from the City of Houston to remove or do any work that affects the roots of any trees that are in the City's Right of Way or setback. To obtain forestry approval, please email Dale Temple at [dale.temple@houstontx.gov](mailto:dale.temple@houstontx.gov) to setup an appointment.

### Will your project encroach on an easement?

You will be required to obtain an exemption from the Office of City Engineer if your project encroaches on any portion of the street or roadway easement. You will be required to apply for Consent to Easement Encroachment through the Utility Analysis – Developer Services Section if your project encroaches on a City of Houston utility easement. If you have questions regarding this, please contact Sarun Chhin at 832-394-8986.

*NOTE: If the easement is dedicated to the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD), you must have your plans approved by HCFCD prior to obtaining a permit from the City. If your easement is dedicated to a utility company, you will need to obtain a release from the utility company. Contacts for utility company easement questions can be found in the left hand column on this page*

### What is the total cost of your project?

The estimated project cost will be needed in order to complete the building permit application. (See page 5 for more information.)

### Do you know the sizes of the sanitary sewer line and water line that serves your property?

This information can be obtained by visiting the City of Houston GIMS website at [www.gims.houstontx.gov](http://www.gims.houstontx.gov). This information is useful when completing the Wastewater Capacity Reservation (WCR) form and will help determine if your building permit can be issued the same day (provided you have provided all information to be approved) or if your plans have to be routed for utility analysis review and approval which can take 10 - 12 days

## DEFINITIONS

<b>BASE FLOOD ELEVATION (BFE)</b>	The expected height of flooding during the base flood or “100-year event” (a rainstorm that has a 1% chance of occurring in a given year).
<b>BUILDING ELEVATION</b>	Two-dimensional view of each side of the building.
<b>CHANGE IN USE/CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY</b>	When the property or part of the property is being converted from one building use or classification code to another, as in the case of a residence to an office space, beauty salon, or other type of space.
<b>CONVEYANCE ZONE</b>	The portion of the Special Flood Hazard Area that is utilized to convey water during the occurrence of the base flood. Areas in a floodplain where natural ground is 18 inches below base flood elevation or are within 100 feet of the floodway are defined as conveyance zones.
<b>DEED RESTRICTIONS</b>	Written agreements that restrict or limit the use or activities that may take place on a property in a subdivision. Deed restrictions come with the property and cannot be changed or removed by subsequent owners.
<b>EASEMENT</b>	Areas set aside for installation and maintenance of utilities by public and private utility operators. You cannot typically build on these areas because they would limit access to the utilities.
<b>FLOODPLAIN</b>	Land area around a stream, river or bayou that would be affected by flooding during a “100-year event” (a rainstorm that has a 1% chance of occurring in a given year), because the water is no longer contained within the banks of the stream, river or bayou during or after that event. In the City of Houston, this area has been mapped throughout the City and can be found on the GIMS (Geographic Information & Management System) website. <a href="http://www.gims.houstontx.gov">www.gims.houstontx.gov</a> The floodplain is also known as “A” zones on flood insurance maps produced by FEMA. “A” zones include Zone A, Zone AE and Zone AO.
<b>FLOODWAY</b>	The area for storm runoff along a bayou, river, or other watercourse. In the City of Houston, this area has been mapped throughout the City and can be found on the GIMS website. <a href="http://www.gims.houstontx.gov">www.gims.houstontx.gov</a>
<b>HOMEOWNER’S ASSOCIATION (HOA)</b>	An organization created by a group of property owners, or property developers which helps to oversee any shared property belonging to the homeowner group, and which usually has a legal means of enforcing agreed upon rules the homeowners must follow.
<b>IMPACT FEE</b>	A one-time fee imposed by the City of Houston on a new or proposed development project. This fee is used to pay for the management of water planning for both the near and long term facilities requirements. This planning is essential in order to ensure reliable service for today and in the future.
<b>PROJECT COST</b>	This includes the total cost of construction to the end user, excluding the land purchase costs and the overhead attributed to the land purchase. It also includes the value of donated goods and services.
<b>SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT</b>	City of Houston Ordinance Chapter 19-2 states that a “substantial improvement” means any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition or other improvement of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50% of the current market value of the structure (before the start of the construction of the improvement).
<b>WASTEWATER CAPACITY RESERVATIONS (WCR) LETTER</b>	Indicates whether utilities are available and adequate to serve the proposed development, shows the location of the connection point to the City’s utilities and provides an assessment of any impact fees.

**Customer Tip:**

Before you start digging, dial 811 or visit [www.lonestar811.com](http://www.lonestar811.com) to contact Lone Star 811 "Call Before You Dig Center." This will enable the utility company to come out and mark where the gas lines are located on your property.

**WHAT SPECIAL CONDITIONS EXIST?**

The following items represent the special conditions that must be considered as you prepare your plans:

**Planning and Development Department**

If your project changes the current use or there is a change of occupancy of any portion of the existing structure, the project needs to be reviewed by the Planning and Development Department.

**Floodplain Management Office (FMO)**

**NOTE:** Adding a second story is considered a remodel for the purposes of floodplain permits

- ☐ If the project is in the 100-year floodplain or floodway and represents a 'substantial improvement' to the property, then the entire building must be brought into compliance with the elevation requirement as explained below.
  - For properties in 100-year floodplain, where the remodel is not a second story addition, the minimum flood protection elevation for the lowest floor and utilities of a building is 12" above Base Flood Elevation.
  - For properties in the floodway, the minimum flood protection elevation for the lowest horizontal member and utilities is 18" above Base Flood Elevation (BFE). Completely open foundations are required in the floodway. (An example of an open foundation is a pier and beam foundation.)

## DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR BUILDING PERMIT APPROVAL

### ☐ Building Permit Application

This form should be completed prior to arriving at the Houston Permitting Center (HPC).

### ☐ Deed Restriction Affidavit

(Only Required If There Is A Change In Use Or Change Of Occupancy)

The deed restriction affidavit must be signed by the owner and notarized. Notaries are available free of charge at the HPC. Please do not sign the affidavit without a notary present.

### ☐ 2009 Residential Energy Conservation Form (Form 1246) or Approved Software

**NOTE:** You only have to fill out the first page of form 1246. Form 1259 is not required for remodels.

### ☐ Two complete sets of plans drawn to scale

- If an exterior remodel, provide a site plan drawn to a recognized (Architect or Engineer's) scale and showing the existing property lines, easements, building setback lines, the existing building, and other structures located on the site
- Provide floor plan of existing building and show in detail affected area
- Typical wall section
- Plans shall indicate materials used
- Demolition of any load bearing walls will require plans showing the direction of ceiling joists, and the location of header beams

### ☐ Project Cost (see Definitions on page 3):

For a building permit, the required cost estimate is a market valuation that includes the profit and overhead.

**Note:** If the project cost appears to be unreasonably low, a signed contract between the owner and contractor may be required.

### ☐ Floodplain Plan Review Requirements

You must provide the following if your property resides in the 100-year floodplain, floodway or conveyance zone:

- A cost estimate must be provided in one of the following ways:
  - A signed, sealed, and dated cost estimate provided by a professional engineer or architect, each licensed by the state of Texas
  - A cost estimate prepared, signed and dated by an insurance adjustor, licensed by the state of Texas, may be provided to document the cost of repairing a damaged structure.
  - A notarized contract of work signed and dated by the property owner and a contractor
  - An owner-certified cost estimate with an owner- notarized signature may be submitted when the property owner proposes to construct the improvements or repairs. In such cases, the cost estimate must itemize the cost of materials and a reasonable estimate of the market value of labor for work performed by the owner. The Floodplain Management Office has developed a form ([\*Project Cost Estimation Worksheet\*](#)) that can be used for owner self-certification of cost.



**KEY CONTACTS****Houston Permitting Center**

Hours of Operation:

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

1002 Washington Ave.

Houston, TX 77002

Phone: 832-394-9000

Email: [houston.permittingcenter@houstontx.gov](mailto:houston.permittingcenter@houstontx.gov)**Building Code Enforcement Permits**

Hours of Operation:

8:00am – 5:00pm

Contact Information:

Phone: 832-394-9494

Email: [rmcad@houstontx.gov](mailto:rmcad@houstontx.gov)**Taps & Meters Plan Review**

Hours of Operation:

8:00 am – 3:30 pm

Contact Information:

Phone: 832-394-8971 or 832-394-8890

Email: [Jacqueline.DeDiego2@houstontx.gov](mailto:Jacqueline.DeDiego2@houstontx.gov) or[Danika.Chevalier@houstontx.gov](mailto:Danika.Chevalier@houstontx.gov)**Planning and Development Plan Review**

Hours of Operation:

8:00am – 4:00pm

Contact Information:

Phone: 832-394-8849

Email: [pd.planning@houstontx.gov](mailto:pd.planning@houstontx.gov)**Floodplain Management Office**

Hours of Operation:

8:00am – 4:30pm

Contact Information:

Phone: 832-394-8854

Email: [fmo@houstontx.gov](mailto:fmo@houstontx.gov)**Storm Water Plan Review**

Hours of Operation:

8:00am – 4:30pm

Contact Information:

Phone: 832-394-9124

Email: [Sam.Habibi@houstontx.gov](mailto:Sam.Habibi@houstontx.gov)**Inspections**

General Number..... 713-222-9922

Flood..... 832-394-8854

Structural..... 832-394-8840

Electrical..... 832-394-8860

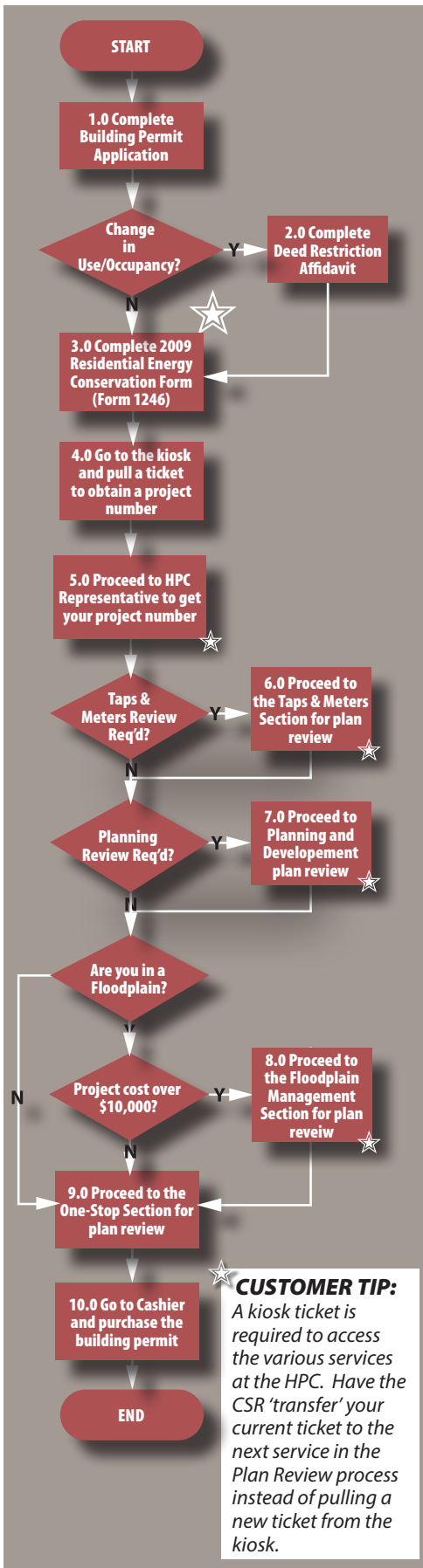
Mechanical..... 832-394-8850

Plumbing..... 832-394-8870

- Documentation of the market value of the existing structure must be provided in one of the following ways:
  - The most recent property appraisal from Harris County Appraisal District ([www.hcad.org](http://www.hcad.org)) OR Montgomery Central Appraisal District ([www.mcad-tx.org](http://www.mcad-tx.org)) OR Fort Bend Central Appraisal District ([www.fbcad.org](http://www.fbcad.org))
  - An appraisal performed by a certified real estate appraiser licensed by the Texas Appraiser Licensing and Certification Board (TALCB) that documents the market value of the structure prior to the proposed project or represents a depreciated replacement cost.

*If proposed remodel is a 'substantial improvement' (refer to Definitions page 3, the FMO requires all documentation below:*

- Either provide an elevation certificate based on finished construction documenting that the existing building's finished floor meets the elevation requirements (refer to special conditions) or provide an elevation certificate based on construction drawings and prepared by a licensed surveyor or engineer that shows that the building will be modified to meet the elevation requirements
- If the project includes a crawl space, adequate flood openings and drainage in the crawl space must be shown on the plans
- Calculations for flood openings must be provided with plans
- For projects within the floodway, pier and beam construction is required
- For projects within the floodway, a "no adverse impact" letter and supporting documentation prepared by a professional engineer is required



## STEPS TO FOLLOW AT THE HPC FOR THE BUILDING PERMIT

- 1.0 Complete the Building Permit Application prior to arriving at the HPC.
- 2.0 Complete the Deed Restriction Affidavit only when there is a change of use or a change in occupancy. The Deed Restriction Affidavit must be signed by the owner and notarized. There are free notaries available at the HPC. *Please do not sign the Affidavit without a notary present.* Proceed to Step 3 if the Affidavit is not required.
- 3.0 Before coming to the HPC, download and complete the 2009 Residential Energy Conservation Form (Form 1246) or Approved Software
- 4.0 Once at the HPC you must obtain a ticket for a project number from the kiosk station located on the first floor and wait for your number to be called.
- 5.0 HPC Customer Service Representatives (CSR) will call you on a first-come, first-serve basis to setup the project number.
- 6.0 Proceed to the Taps & Meters section if the residence is greater than 3,000 square feet AND there is an increase in the number of plumbing fixtures. If this is not the case, please proceed to next step.
- 7.0 The Planning Department must review the plans if you changing the use or occupancy of the structure. If this is not the case, please proceed to next step.
- 8.0 The Floodplain Management Office is responsible for permitting all construction activity within the City of Houston's Special Flood Hazard Area (100-year floodplain, floodway or conveyance zone). You only need to visit the Floodplain Management Office if your project is located in the 100-year floodplain, floodway or conveyance zone AND if the estimated project cost is greater than \$10,000. If this is not the case, please proceed to Step 9.
- 9.0 The One-Stop Plan Review section ensures plans submitted are in compliance with the current construction codes. This section will issue the building permit (which authorizes you to begin construction) after your plans have been approved by all required departments/sections. A sales order will be provided to take to the cashier to purchase the building permit.
- 10.0 All monetary transactions are handled by the cashier on the 1st floor. The cashier will be able to provide your building permit once all fees have been paid.

SECTION	KIOSK PATH
Building Permits	Permits -> Building Construction -> Project Number / Single Trade
Taps & Meters	Other Services -> Utility Analysis/Taps & Meters-> Taps and Meters Plan Review
Planning and Development	Plan Review -> Planning & Development -> Site Plan Review
Floodplain Management Office	Plan Review -> Flood Management Plan Review -> Flood Management
One-Stop Plan Review	Plan Review -> Building Plan Review -> One Stop Plan Review

**Customer Tip:**

All required inspections can be scheduled online at [www.pdinet.pd.houstontx.gov/cohilms/webs/Inspection\\_Lookup.asp](http://www.pdinet.pd.houstontx.gov/cohilms/webs/Inspection_Lookup.asp) or by contacting the Building Inspection Line at 713-222-9922.

The owner can only schedule building permit inspections. All other inspections must be scheduled by a licensed contractor.

**WHAT INSPECTIONS SHOULD BE EXPECTED?**

All required inspections are listed on the building permit job card. The following are some typical inspections that are performed for most remodel projects. These inspections may change depending on each project's scope of work.

- ☐ Pier / Foundation – Call before placement of concrete
- ☐ Windstorm – Call prior to exterior sheathing installation to verify fasteners / straps
- ☐ Frame – Call after Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing (MEP) rough-ins and prior to installing insulation and gypsum board. Note: Truss plans should be approved at this time.
- ☐ Lath / Brick Tie – Call after frame inspection has been approved
- ☐ Insulation – Call after frame inspection has been approved
- ☐ Building Final – Call after the entire project has been completed to verify that all life safety and grading items have been installed and are working properly

**Mechanical Inspections**

- ☐ Duct Seal – Call before insulation and gypsum board is installed
- ☐ Cover – Call before insulation and gypsum board is installed
- ☐ Grille Seal – Call before insulation and gypsum board is installed
- ☐ Final – Call after work is complete

**Electrical Inspections**

- ☐ Ditch Cover – Call when underground conduit is put in
- ☐ Rough In – Call when walls and ceiling wired
- ☐ TCI – Call when temporary power is needed to check wiring
- ☐ Meter Loop Services / Final – Call after all work is completed

**Plumbing Inspections**

- ☐ Ground, Sewer, Water Service, Storm Drainage, Lawn Sprinklers - Call before pipes are covered
- ☐ Rough In – Call before gypsum board is installed
- ☐ Gas / Final – Call when work is complete

**Flood Inspections**

(Only If Project Is In The 100-year Floodplain, Floodway Or Conveyance Zone)

**For projects that only include an interior remodel:**

- ☐ Pre-construction
- ☐ Final Floodplain Inspection

**For projects that include modifications to the building's elevation:**

- ☐ Pre-Construction
- ☐ Pre-Fill Mitigation Certificate (prior to introducing any dirt or building materials for site)
- ☐ Second Elevation Certification (after pouring foundation and prior to framing)
- ☐ Final Site work (upon completion of all work outside of the building)
- ☐ Third Elevation Certificate (upon completion of structure)



**LINKS TO APPLICATIONS, FORMS AND SAMPLE DRAWINGS**

The below documents can be accessed by clicking the hyperlinks or by visiting

[www.houstonpermittingcenter.org/code-enforcement/publications.html](http://www.houstonpermittingcenter.org/code-enforcement/publications.html)

**Applications and Forms**

1. [Building Permit Application](#)
2. [Deed Restriction Affidavit](#)
3. [2009 Residential Energy Conservation Form \(Form 1246\)](#)
4. [Project Cost Estimation Worksheet](#) (Flood Requirement Only)

**Sample Drawings and Other Useful Information**

- 1.. [Conveyance Zone FAQ](#)
- 2.. [Infrastructure Design Manual \(IDM\)](#)
- 3.. [GIMS - How to Check Floodplain Status](#)